Optimism, Humor Styles and Hopelessness as Predictors of Meaning in Life for Turkish University Students[1]

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine whether optimism, humor styles and hopelessness levels are significant predictors of meaning in life and its sub-scales, the presence of meaning in life and the search for meaning in life. The research was carried out with the participation of a total of 224 students, 158 females and 66 males, who attend the Faculty of Educational Sciences in Mehmet AkifErsoy University. The research data was obtained by utilizing theMeaning in Life Questionnaire, Life Orientation Scale, Beck Hopelessness Scaleand the Humor Styles Scale. In the research, the standard multiple regression analysis was used to test the power of hopelessness, optimism and humor styles in predicting the meaning in life among university students. According to the research findings, hopelessness and self-defeating humor negatively predict the presence of meaning in life, while optimism positively predicts the presence of meaning in life. Hopelessness and self-defeating humor predict significantly meaning in life in a negative way and optimism predicts meaning in life in a positive way. Finally, hopelessness and self-defeating humor predict search for meaning negatively, and optimism predicts positively search for meaning in life.

Keywords: *Meaning in life, hopelessness, humor styles, optimism*

1. Introduction

Meaning in life is one of the important concepts of existentialist psychology. Frankl (1992) indicates that the search for meaning in life relieves the stress caused by painful events that people experience in their lives. Meaning in life, at the same time, is regarded as a positive personality structure and an indicator of well-being (Ryff, 1989). Analyzing the field literature, one can see that there are several words and concepts used to express an individual's state of well-being. Emphasized in the definition of health, meanings of the state of being well include concepts such as well-being, subjective well-being, psychological well-being, life satisfaction, quality of life, meaning in life and religious (Özen, 2010),and well-being vary with cultural features (Quraishi and Evangeli, 2007; Şahin and Karabeyoğlu-Akman, 2010). According to Lent (2004), meaning is one of a set of growth-related variables that are thought to provide the conditions from which happiness arises. Thus, meaning may contribute to the foundation of overall client happiness (Steger, and Frazier; Oishi, and Kaler, 2006).

As a concept, meaning in life was used by philosophers, linguists and psychologists as a research topic. The theoretical and functional definitions of meaning in life show that it is associated with lives, memories and mental processes. While explaining the concept of meaning in life, the search for meaning in life and the presence of meaning also gain importance. The search for meaning in life does not have a clear definition, but it is a prerequisite of mental and physical well-being (Wong, 2012).The search for meaning may vary from person to person and situation to situation. Therefore, life does not have a universal meaning.

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However, sometimes meanings may be shared by people in different societies, cultures and historical periods. The meaning is hidden in the basic beliefs and relationships of the individual. Therefore, the ultimate search for meaning involves different levels such as current meaning and cultural meaning-value (Das, 1999; Metz, 2013). According to Jones (1995), the search for meaning is the main motive in an individual's life and is one of the reliable criteria of mental health. According to Frankl (1992), the meaning of life may vary in time; however, the search never disappears. There are various ways to find meaning in life. These include dealing with a job, interacting with humans, developing an attitude towards inevitable pains, experiencing goodness, correctness and beauty, experiencing nature and culture, and loving others. Steger, and Frazier; Oishi, and Kaler, (2006), defined meaning in life as the sense made of, and significance felt regarding, the nature of one's being and existence. Considering the comments made about meaning in life, one can observe that meaning in life does not have a single and universal definition but it is associated with several concepts, also covering positive psychology.

Many studies have revealed that people who consider their life meaningful have positive affectivity, high self-esteem, show fewer symptoms of depression, and tend to have lower anxiety and suicidal tendencies (Steger and Kashdan, 2007). According to De Klerk (2005), individuals' meaning sources are very diverse. Wong (2002) developed a "personal meaning profile" to measure significant life sources. This profile includes success, religion, interpersonal relationships, self-transcendence, self-acceptance, heartiness and being fair. Examining the field literature, as well as studies analyzing meaning in terms of variables such as gender, race, piety, old age and fatal diseases like cancer (Arda, 2011; Demirbaş, 2010; Steger, Frazier, Oishi and Kaler, 2006), there are also studies available that analyze meaning in terms of concepts such as psychological well-being, state of well-being, subjective well-being, personality, cognitive styles, self-esteem, control focus and life satisfaction (Demirbaş, 2010; Fry, 2000; Lightsey, 2006; Ryff, 1989; Santos, Magromo, Oguan, Paat and Barnachea, 2012; Steger, Kashdan, Sullivan and Lorentz, 2008).

According to Frankl (1992), humor is among the important elements that give meaning to life. Humor enables an individual to look at his/her life positively and it affects physical health (Tümkaya, 2011). In addition, humor reduces tension, while improving psychological and physical health, and contributing to individuals' quality of life (İlhan, 2005). According to the field literature, four different styles emerge regarding daily life usage of humor. Accordingly, self-enhancing and affiliative styles of humor are included in the "harmonious" category and self-defeating and self-aggressive styles of humor are included the "inharmonious" category (Yerlikaya, 2007). Self-enhancing humor refers to the trend of humor usage as a coping strategy and looking at life with a humorous point of view during times of stress. Self-enhancing humor requires a humorous point of view towards life, shows an inclination towards having fun with restraints in life, and provides a humorous point of view even in the face of stress and distress (Yılmaz, 2011). Affiliative humor is the type of humor apparent when an individual focuses on others without ignoring their own needs. Affiliative humor refers to usage of humor by an individual respectfully to himself/herself and others, in a way to develop interpersonal interactions. Individuals having this style at a high level tend to say funny things, amuse others with jokes, facilitate relationships and reduce interpersonal tensions (Yerlikaya, 2007). Aggressive humor is the usage of humor by an individual with a view to meeting his/her own demands related to their sole superiority and gratification of feelings in a way that is socially inappropriate. Aggressive humor refers to an individual's use of prickling, mocking and teasing as a tool, even at the expense of their relationship with others (Yılmaz, 2001). Self-defeating humor is a style an individual uses without considering the humor and his/her own needs. This type of humor covers an individual's own discrediting and satirizing of himself/herself to make others laugh. Another example of this type of humor is when an individual behaves happy and defies his/her own feelings when upset (Yerlikaya, 2007).

Another concept discussed in this study is optimism. Optimism is defined as a tendency towards perceiving more positive events rather than negative events in the surroundings of an individual (Türküm, 1999). According to Scheier and Carver (1985), optimism is a learnable feature that is defined as the fact that an individual hopes for positive results rather than negative ones and thinks positively when he/she is faced with problems experienced in his/her environment (cited in Kutlu, Balcı and Yılmaz, 2004). With a more positive point of view toward life, optimists focus on more appropriate and positive aspects of situations and events; they have positive expectations to obtain the best developments in the future (Seligman, 1990). Therefore, it is expected that optimists have future-oriented life objectives.

Hopelessness, on the other hand, is when an individual develops negative expectations towards the future and considers his/her own capacity to be less than it actually is (Beck, 1995).

Beck defined hopelessness as an individual's negative expectation about the future (cited in Seber, Dilbaz, Kaptanoğlu and Tekin, 1993). Research has revealed that hopeless individuals in general cannot cope with stress, are suicidal, show more resignation behaviors, and tend to be alone and anxious (Chang, Sanna, Hirsch and Jeglic, 2010; Husky, Mazure, Maciejewski and Swendsen, 2007; Tümkaya, Hamarta, Deniz, Çelik and Aybek 2012; Özmen, Dündar, Çetinkaya, Taşkın and Özmen, 2008).

Since university life includes change in various fields, it is a period that requires young adults to adapt to their environment. Several development duties await the young adult, such as being a grown-up individual, finding a job, establishing a family, productivity at work, productivity in the family and taking responsibility as a citizen. During the university years, in fulfillment of this duty, it is deemed critical for students to develop positive features that may help them to hold on to life, cling to life and find success. Furthermore, determining factors increasing life meaning for young adults continuing their university education may support their decision-making and realistic planning abilities for the future. On the other hand, the absence of these factors may provide ideas to professional staff regarding preventive interventions and the provision of psychological assistance for students.According to Baessler and Oerter (2003), meaning in life as an individual concept has both cultural and universal features (cited in Pan, Wong, Joubert and Chan, 2008). Culturally, determining predictors of meaning in life among Turkish university students will contribute to the field. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to reveal whether optimism, humor styles and hopelessness levels significantly predict meaning in life and its sub-scales, the presence of meaning in life and the search for meaning in life.

2. Method

2.1 Study Group

The study group for the research consisted of 224 students who participated in the study voluntarily and who attended the Faculty of Education, Psychological Counseling and Guidance, Art, Elementary Teacher Education, Social Studies Teacher Education, Early Childhood Teacher Education, Science Teaching and Turkish Teaching Departments in Mehmet AkifErsoy University. The study group comprised 158 females (70.5%), 66 males (29.5%); 42 participants (18.8%) were in the first grade, 59 (26.3%) were in the second grade, 61 of them (27.2%) were in the third grade, and 62 of them (27.7%) were in the fourth grade.

2.2 Data Collection Tools

2.2.1 Meaning in Life Scale: The Meaning in Life Scale was developed by Steger, Frazier, Oishi and Kaler (2006) and translated into Turkish by Demirbaş (2010). The Meaning in Life Scale consists of ten Likert-scale items scaled and two sub-scales. As a result of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, the sub-scales of the scale are determined as "presence of meaning in life" and "search for meaning in life". Since people with meaning in life do not seek meaning, two sub-scales point in different directions. Nine items of the Meaning in Life Scale contain positive expressions and one item (the 9th item) includes a negative expression. When scoring for this scale, the 9th item is applied with reserve scoring. The two sub-scales of the scale consist of different structures. The sub-scales of the Meaning in Life Scale are also employed as two distinct scales. The total points for each sub-scale can be 35 at most. A high score obtained from the presence of meaning in life scale shows that the individual has meaning in life. Receiving a high score from the search for meaning in life scale means that meaning in life is being searched for/researched. On the other hand, in order to get a total scoreit is necessary to reverse score the items related to search for meaning in life (2nd, 3rd, 7th, 8th and 10th items). The criterion-related validity of the scale was found to be .22 with Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and .36 with Life Satisfaction Scale showing a significant correlation. For test-retest reliability of the scale, a group consisting of 39 Istanbul University students was applied with the scale and a .81 level of relation was found. Furthermore, the internal consistency of the scale was calculated as .86, the presence of meaning in life as .87, and the search for meaning in life as .88.

2.2.2 Life Orientation Test: In the research, to determine the level of optimism among university students, the "Life Orientation Test", developed by Scheier and Carver (1987) and translated into Turkish by Aydın and Tezer (1991), was used. The reliability of the Turkish form of the scale was obtained by calculating test-retest and internal consistency coefficients. For this purpose, the Life Orientation Test was applied to a group consisting of 97 people from the Middle East Technical University for a period of four weeks. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be .72 and the reliability coefficient was .77.

For the validity of the scale, its relationship with the Beck Depression Inventory was analyzed and a -.56 correlation coefficient was obtained. The Life Orientation Test consists of 12 items including 4 positive, 4 negative and 4 filler items.

2.2.3. Beck Hopelessness Scale: The Beck Hopelessness Scale was developed by Beck, Weissman, Lester and Trexler in 1974 with a view to rating an individual's negative expectations for the future. In Turkey, validity and reliability research for the Beck Hopelessness Scale was first conducted by GültenSeber in 1993. In a study conducted on a sample of 107 people, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient determined for reliability was found to be a=0.86 and the Pearson product-moment correlation was found to be r=0.73 (Seber*et al.*, 1993). In a study conducted by Hisli (1989), the relationship between the MMPI-D Scale and the Beck Hopelessness Scale was reported as .74 and the internal consistency coefficient as .80. In a study conducted by Durak and Palabıyıkoğlu (1994), the relationship between the Beck Hopelessness Scale and the Beck Depression Inventory was found to be .69. The 1st, 3rd, 7th, 11th and 18th items of the Beck Hopelessness Scale constitute the factor of "feelings and expectations about future"; the 2nd, 4th, 9th, 12th, 16th, 17th and 20th items constitute the factor of "loss of motivation"; and the 5th, 6th, 8th, 10th, 13th, 15th and 19th items constitute the factor of "hope".

2.2.4 Humor Styles Scale (HSQ): Developed by Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray and Weir (2003), and translated into Turkish by Yerlikaya (2003), the "Humor Styles Scale" scaled the humor types in the study. This scale consists of 32 items with the objective of measuring four different sub-scales regarding individuals' use of humor. Using Likert-type grading, the scale is compatible with affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor sub-scales, and is incompatible with aggressive humor and self-defeating humor sub-scales. As a result of the adaptationof the scale adopted by Yerlikaya (n=485), the Cronbach's alpha coefficients regarding HSQ's sub-scales was found to be 0.74 for affiliative humor, 0.78 for self-enhancing humor, 0.69 for aggressive humor and 0.67 for self-defeating humor. Adopted within a two-week period the test-retest correlation coefficients of the scale (n=63) were: 0.88 for affiliative humor, 0.82 for self-enhancing humor, 0.85 for aggressive humor and 0.85 for self-defeating humor.

2.3 Data Analysis

In the study, a standard multiple regression analysis was employed to reveal the power of prediction by hopelessness, optimism and humor styles in the meaning in life levels of university students. Prior to analysis, it was determined whether the data had peak values by calculating standard z scores; it was found that the data were between -3 and +3. In addition, by means of kurtosis and skewness coefficients, it was verified whether the data showed normal distribution or not. Finally, to determine whether there was multiple correlations between variables and binary correlations, the Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated between variables. The data were tested on 0.05 level of significance.

3. Findings

The results of the Pearson correlation coefficients and descriptive statistics calculated for binary relations between hopelessness, optimism, humor styles and meaning in life and its sub-scales, i.e. search for meaning in life and presence of meaning in life, are shown in Table I.

Table I. *Descriptive Statistics Correlation Coefficients for Regarding Variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Presence of meaning in life	-								
2. Search for meaning in life	-.221**	-							
3. Meaning in life	.629**	-.897**	-						
4. Hopelessness	-.398**	.229**	-.363**	-					
5. Optimism	.369**	-.156*	.291**	-.492**	-				
6. Self-defeating humor	-.217**	.192**	-.251**	.161*	-.077	-			
7. Aggressive humor	-.239**	-.002	-.106	.093	-.197**	.332**	-		
8. Self-enhancing humor	.169*	.083	.010	-.192**	.332**	.219**	-.011	-	
9. Affiliative humor	.154*	.005	.066	-.172**	.187**	.233**	-.103	.375**	-
Average	28.8	20.1	48.75	3.12	27.5	26.1	20.3	34.8	42.3
Standard deviation	4.80	8.46	10.61	3.74	4.57	7.77	7.30	8.93	7.79
Kurtosis	.314	-920	-.456	.892	-392	-404	-269	-347	-220
Skewness	-837	-195	.372	.640	-084	.189	.613	.042	-509

**P<0.01, *P<0.05

As seen in Table I, the skewness values calculated for meaning in life and its sub-scales, and hopelessness, humor styles and optimism points are shown as ranging between .042 and .837, and kurtosis values as ranging between .220 and .920.These values are within the range of -1 and 1, considered as acceptable limits, and, accordingly, it can be seen that they show normal distribution. Analyzing the binary Pearson correlation coefficients presented in Table 1, it can be seen that meaning in life has a negative significant relationship with self-defeating humor and a positive significant relationship with optimism. While there is a negative significant relationship between the presence of meaning in life and hopelessness, self-defeating humor and aggressive humor, there is a positive relationship between optimism and self-enhancing humor and affiliative humor. Finally, there is a positive significant relationship between the search for meaning in life and hopelessness, self-defeating humor, andnegative significant relationship between the search for meaning in life and optimism.

The results of the standard multiple regression analysis, conducted to test whether hopelessness, optimism and humor styles are significant predictors of meaning in life and its subscale of search for meaning in life and the presence of meaning in life, are shown in Table II.

Table II. *Multiple Regression Analysis Results of Hopelessness, Optimism and Humor Styles Related to Meaning in Life*

Variables	B	Sh	β	t	p
Presence of meaning in life					
Hopelessness	-.321	.089	-.250	-3.619	.000
Optimism	.182	.075	.173	2.418	.016
Self-defeating humor	-.096	.042	-.155	-2.302	.022
Aggressive humor	-.080	.042	-.122	-1.886	.061
Self-enhancing humor	.036	.036	.068	1.000	.318
Affiliative humor	.047	.041	.077	1.164	.246
$R= .499\ R^2= .249\ F_{(6-223)}= 12.019,\ p <.01$					
Search for meaning in life					
Hopelessness	.391	.171	.173	2.290	.023
Optimism	-.208	.145	-.113	-1.439	.152
Self-defeating humor	.185	.080	.170	2.304	.022
Aggressive humor	-.116	.082	-.100	-1.419	.157
Self-enhancing humor	.125	.070	.132	1.784	.076
Affiliative humor	-.047	.079	-.044	-.602	.548
$R= .318 R^2=.101\ F_{(6-223)}= 4.059,\ p <.01$					
Meaning in life					
Hopelessness	-.712	.203	-.251	-3.507	.001
Optimism	.390	.172	.168	2.266	.024
Self-defeating humor	-.281	.095	-.206	-2.944	.004
Aggressive humor	.036	.097	.025	.371	.711
Self-enhancing humor	-.089	.083	-.075	-1.065	.288
Affiliative humor	.095	.093	.070	1.014	.311
$R= .439 R^2=.193\ F_{(6-223)}= 8.650,\ p <.01$					

According to the t-test results related to the significance of regression coefficients in Table II, it can be seen that hopelessness (t=-3.507, p<.01) and self-defeating humor (t=-2.944, p<.01) predict meaning in life in a negative way, and optimism (t=2.266, p<.05) predicts it significantly in a positive way. However, it can be seen that aggressive humor (t =.371, p>.05), self-enhancing humor (t=-1.065, p>.05) and affiliative humor (t=1.014, p>.05) do not predict *meaning in life* significantly. However, it can be seen that hopelessness, optimism and self-defeating humor explain 19% (R=.439 R2=.193 F (6-223)=8.650, p<.01) of total variance of meaning in life. According to standardized regression coefficients, the order of importance for significant predictors of meaning in life is hopelessness (β =-.25), self-defeating humor (β =-.21) and optimism (β =.17).

According to the t-test results related to the sub-scales of the presence of meaning in life, it can be seen that hopelessness (t=-3.62, p<.01) and self-defeating humor (t=-2.30, p<.05) predict meaning in lifesignificantly in a negative manner, and optimism predicts it (t=2.42, p<.05) significantly in a positive manner; however, aggressive humor (t =-1.88, p>.05), self-enhancing humor (t=1.00, p>.05) and affiliative humor (t=1.16, p>.05) do not predict it significantly. However, it can be seen that hopelessness, optimism and the self-defeating humor style explain 25% (R=.499 R2=.249 F (6-223)=12.019, p<.01) of total variance of meaning in life.

According to the standardized regression coefficients, the order of importance for significant predictors of presence of meaning in life is: hopelessness (β =-.25), optimism (β =-.17) and self-defeating humor (β =.15).
Regarding the sub-scalesof the search for meaning in life, it can be seen that hopelessness (t =2.290, p<.05) and self-defeating humor (t =2.304, p<.05) predict search for meaning in life significantly in a positive manner; however, optimism (t =-1.439, p>.05), aggressive humor (t =-1.419, p>.05), self-enhancing humor (t =1.784, p>.05) and affiliative humor (t=-.602, p>.05) do not predict it significantly. It is apparent that hopelessness and the self-defeating humor style, as significant predictors of search for meaning in life, explain 10% (R=318 R2=.101 F (6-223)=4.059, p<.01) of total variance of search for meaning in life. According to the standardized regression coefficients, the order of importance for significant predictors of search for meaning in life is: despair (β =.173) and self-defeating humor (β=.170).

4. Discussion

According to the results of the study, which analyzed whether Turkish university students' levels of optimism, humor styles and hopelessness significantly predict meaning in life, and thepresence of meaning in life and search for meaning in life.According to the first finding, optimism was a significantpredictor ofmeaning in life and the presence of meaning in life and it wasn't a significant predictor of search for meaning in life. Analyzing the field literature, it can be seen that meaning in life is evaluated as an indicator of well-being and there is a significantly positive relationship among positive concepts such as life satisfaction, positive affective and resilience (Cash, 2000; Demirbaş, 2010; De Klerk, 2005; Hicks and King, 2007; Jaarsma, Pool, Ranchor and Sanderman, 2007; Kashdan and Steger, 2007; Scannell, Allen and Burton, 2002; Steger and Kashdan, 2007; Steger, Frazier, Oishi and Kaler, 2006, Temane and Wissing, 2006). Meaninglessness is evaluated as an indicator of lack of well-being, and a negative relationship was determined with negative affect such as suicide indications, alcohol abuse, anxiety and depression (Debats, 1999; Edwards and Holden, 2001; Harlow, Newcomb and Bentler, 1986; Mascaro and Rosen, 2005; Zika and Chamberlain, 1992). Optimism is a positive concept and it significantly predicts life satisfaction (Güler and Emeç, 2006), problem-solving skills (Aydın and Tezer, 1991), interests, goal setting, well-being state and self-esteem (Çelik, 2008; Schette and Hosch, 1996), happiness and life satisfaction (Sapmaz and Doğan, 2012). It is determined that there is a positive relationship between optimism and life harmony (Chang, Maydeu-Olivares and D'zurilla, 1997). Eryılmaz and Atak (2011) identified a positive significant relationship between subjective well-being and optimism. According to researchers, the life views of optimistic adolescents are more positive than others and this situation is supported by those adolescents' subjective well-being. Since the life views of optimistic individuals tend to be more positive, their perspective towards negative events will be positive and their coping mechanisms will be more effective. Therefore, it can be expected that they establish their life objectives and therefore their meaning in life can be higher. In parallel with the significantly positive relationship observed between optimism and various positive concepts, it has been identified also in this study that optimism predicts the presence of meaning in life and meaning in life positively, as expected.

According to another finding of the research, it can be seen that hopelessness predicts the presence of meaning in life and meaning in life positively, and predicts the search for meaning in life negatively. Similarly, Edwards and Holden (2001) analyzed whether meaning in life and coping strategies predict suicide indications, and revealed that there is a negative relationship between meaning in life and suicidal indications. It is indicated that hopelessness has a powerful connection with the intention to commit suicide and it is among the most powerful predictors of suicide (Batıgün, 2008 cited in Weishaar and Beck, 1992). Besides, according to Frankl (2009), people who find meaning in their lives tend to show durability against difficult conditions. Accordingly, it is not surprising that hopeless individuals tend to have lower presence of meaning in life and low meaning in life. In addition, Melges (1969) defines hopelessness as negative expectations and feeling that they have no chance of realizing their objectives (cited in Dilbaz and Seber, 1993). This definition forms a basis for the expectation that hopelessness may be a negative predictor of meaning in life. Şahin, Aydın, Sarı, Kaya and Pala (2012) found a significantly negatively oriented relationship between hope and search for meaning in life, and a significantly positively oriented relationship between hope and presence of meaning. This finding is the opposite of the findings of this research in terms of hopelessness. This is support research's finding. According to Wong (2012), experiencing pain can be trigger to questioning the meaning in life. Therefore, it is expected that hopelessness significantly predicts search for meaning in life in a negative way.

According to the latest finding of the research, while self-defeating humor predicts meaning in life and presence of meaning in life in a negative way, it also predicts search for meaning in life in a negative way.

Studies reveal that self-enhancing humor and affiliative humor, among the harmonious humor types, have a positive relationship with positive personality traits such as self-esteem, positive problem-solving methods (Traş, Arslan and Taş, 2011), positive anger expression styles (Soyaldın, 2007), search for social support, self-confident approach and optimistic approach (Yerlikaya, 2007), and self-defeating and aggressive humor have a significant relationship in a negative way. Separately, it is stated that a positive sense of humor is associated with healthy human relations, commitment (Cann, Norman, Welbourne and Calhoun, 2008), psychological well-being (Kazarian and Martin, 2004) and high marriage satisfaction (Fidanoğlu, 2006). İlhan and Bacanlı (2007) found that self-enhancing humor affects well-being indirectly by means of self-efficiency. However, increasing self-defeating humor usage and decreasing self-enhancing and affiliative humor usage increases depression symptoms (Frewen, Brinker, Martin and Dozois, 2008) and decreases well-being (Kuiper and Nicola, 2009).

While conformable humor types (self-enhancing and affiliative) improve personality, incompatible humor types have personality damaging effects (Kuiper and Leite, 2010). Incompatible types of humor are observed as negatively related with positive concepts. Steger, Frazier, Oishi and Kaler (2006) indicate that presence of meaning in life is positively associated with self-esteem. Achieving high score in sub-scale of search for meaning in life means search for meaning in life and not yet found any meanings (Demirbaş, 2010). Accordingly, individuals who are searching for meaning, which shows that meaning does not exist in their lives yet, can be said to use self-defeating humor since their self-esteem is low. It was revealed that, while having meaning in life has a positive relationship with self-esteem, real self-image and hope, it has a negative relationship with corrupt control focus, alcohol abuse and depression (Demirbaş, 2010). In contradiction to meaning in life, it is an expected result that search for meaning in life has a significant relationship with self-defeating humor as negative scalesof humor.

Based on these research findings, a few suggestions can be made to researchers and specialists providing protective/preventive health services for university students. First of all, psychological counseling and guidance centers should be established in universities. Psychological counseling and guidance services in Turkey are still widely available at secondary education level; however, it is important to provide the services in question for a lifetime. In addition, it is possible to develop and implement psycho-education programs to increase university students' meaning in life and presence of meaning in life and help them in becoming more optimistic, with a positive understanding of humor and becoming individuals who look at life more hopefully; this can be achieved by means of making currently operating psychological counseling and guidance centers more functional. For a country like Turkey, which still has a very young population, it is considered that implementing studies towards improving meaning levels in young lives will have a social contribution. As for researchers, with a view to forming a basis for psycho-education programs to be developed to increase students' meaning levels in life, it is suggested that theoretical models are developed and tested, to explain and further understandthe concept of meaning in life. The main limitation of the study is that it was conducted with a small group and therefore there may be a problem of generalization. At this point, similar studies can be conducted with wider and diverse groups.

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